



The Revolving Cycle of Deployment Psychosocial Issues

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Disclaimer

In this presentation all of the views and perspectives are mine. They do not represent any stance or position taken by either the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army or the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences



Objective

- To discuss the impact of deployments on Soldiers and military families
- To discuss psychosocial issues related to pre-deployment, deployments, reunions and redeployments



Deployment ???

- A military operation in which the service member is sent from a home station, usually as part of a military unit to a distant location to accomplish a specific mission
- Families not permitted
- Deployments affect Soldiers, families, communities, and the nation



Characteristics of soldiers/families

- Worried about combat and terrorism
- Besieged by the Media
- Use of National Guard and Reserves
- Young Married Soldiers
- Single Parents
- Dual military
- Women
- Children: Parental absence
- Recurring Deployments/separations



Deployment Stress in the News

“Mental disorders on the rise”

USA Today, 2005

“Stresses of battle hit Female GIs hard”

Chicago Tribune, 2005

“Long deployments stress military families”

USA Today, 2001

“Treating Family War Wounds”

Washington Post, 2005



Operational Stress Factors

- Environmental Stressors: Weather, food, threats and vulnerabilities, fear of toxins, noise, communications
- Psychological stressors: Reactions to individual and interpersonal factors
- Moral Stressors: Individual/unit sense of rightness or worth of the mission



Phases (cycles) of the Deployment

- Pre-deployment (Preparation)
Stressors:
 - Fear and anxiety
 - Unit readiness training
 - Departure dates
 - Recurring Good-bys
 - Uncertainty/Length of the deployment
 - “New Marriages”



Phases of Deployment (con't)

- Deployment (Separation)
 - Feelings of abandonment/loss
 - Disorganization
 - Austere living conditions
 - Unmasking of psychological disorders
 - Communications
 - Trauma of War
 - Reunion excitement/fears/worry
 - Planning the homecoming
 - Uncertainties



Phases of the deployment (con't)

- Reunion Phase: Stressors
 - Reunion fantasies/unshared experiences
 - Intimacy/changed lives
 - High expectations/ guilt
 - Role definition/changes/confusion
 - Reintegration into the community
 - Beginning of recovery/honeymoon
 - Alcohol/depression/PTSD/Mental Health
 - Re-deployment



Consequences of the Deployment

- Made additional money
- Experienced self-improvement
- Had time to think
- Improved marital relationship
- Helped others
- Traveled/experienced different culture
- Learned to appreciate USA



Consequences (con't)

- Disappointment with chain of command
- Away from family missed events
- Deterioration of marital/SO relationship
- Personal change for the worse
- No reason for the mission
- Lost/wasted/mismanaged money



Compounding Factors

- Wounded and disabled casualties
- Uncertainty about recurring deployments/withdrawal
- Community attitudes/perceptions
- Changing political environment
- Increasing dangers/fears/anxieties
- Transitioning the “cocoon” of supportive services



Healthcare Planning

- Be prepared
- Early identification of problems and treatment strategies
- Collaboration among resource providers
- Collaboration with Guard, Reserves, and active duty installations
- Rural communities
- Explore barriers to help-seeking



Resiliency of military families

- Coping/Strength
- Positive change
- Post traumatic growth
- Bouncing back from adversity
- Services to reduce stress
- Continuum of Care
- Expansion of installation-based services



Services to reduce stress in soldiers and families

- Integrated system of behavioral health support
 - Mental health issues
 - Post-deployment issues
 - Family Advocacy/domestic violence
 - Substance abuse
 - Army One Source



The Continuum of Care in the Army

- Information and education
- Education and life skill building
- Support
- Intervention and referral
- Treatment

Services are keyed to both prevention and treatment initiatives



Conclusion:

- Family/Soldier readiness is a key component of mission readiness during deployment and re-deployment
- Family readiness is Army's top priority
- Deployment related stress is serious; all resources must be engaged to meet responsibilities to Soldiers and families